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## LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES FOR WOMEN MANAGERS IN THE HOSPITALITY AND FINANCIAL SERVICES IN ZIMBABWE

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**Abstract:** *The representation of women in management positions in the private sector in Zimbabwe is low. There are a number of leadership and gender challenges that form a “glass ceiling impinging on women’s advancement to senior positions. This study is based on qualitative research carried out in the hospitality and financial services sectors in Zimbabwe where women have traditionally been found in supportive low level positions. The methodologies used by the study include in-depth case studies, focus group discussions and a questionnaire. Using multiple sources of data enabled triangulation, cross referencing and validation of information. The research identified a number of challenges which related to gender role expectations as wife and parenting. The study established that women managers in the hospitality and financial services sectors in Zimbabwe face challenges of balancing work and life due to culture and gender role expectations placed upon them and the pressures of full time employment. The challenges make it difficult for women to break the “glass ceiling”*

**Keywords:** *Leadership, gender, challenges, women managers, “glass ceiling”*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Women the world over, and in Zimbabwe in particular, are not well represented in leadership positions (Dejene, 2007). For example, in 2004, men in UK represented 63% of the academic staff and occupied the most senior academic and managerial positions. Only 7% of the universities world-wide were managed by women, (Priola, 2004).

In Zimbabwe women have been relegated to service positions which are subordinate to men. Studies have shown that men dominate senior positions and control most of the resources as well. For example in the 2005 parliament there were 34 women out of a total of 150 members and in 2012 the number had come down to 32 women in Parliament comprising 17.9% women representation (Parliamentary debates, House of Assembly Report, 2012). This is a drop in representation when compared to the start of the Global Political Agreement (GPA) in 2009 when the representation of women had increased from 13% to 20% (UNFPA, 2011). No figures are available for the representation of women in leadership in the private sector.

There are challenges related to the expectations placed upon women because of their gender. These gender role expectations require women to take care of the home and family while the men spend most of the time away from home. Women who have full time employment face challenges in the balancing work and life.

At work women managers also face challenges related to gender prejudices. Women are seen as soft and weak and less committed to work than men. They are left out of the “boys clubs”. In the face of these gender prejudices women find themselves needing to work harder than their male counterparts.

The research employed a mixed methods approach of in depth case studies, focus discussion groups and a questionnaire survey. The research aimed at identifying the leadership and gender challenges that the women managers face both at home and at work. The research findings show that the challenges included the following difficulties in striking a good work - life balance, cultural and gender related challenges.

## **PURPOSE/ OBJECTIVES OF THE ARTICLE**

The purpose of this paper is to present findings of the research carried out to identify factors that affect effective participation of women in management in the hospitality and financial services sectors in Zimbabwe.



## **PROBLEM INVESTIGATED**

The participation of women in leadership and management positions in the private sector in Zimbabwe is low. The problem is that research has established that there are a number of barriers posed by the “glass ceiling” that impinge on women’s advancement into senior management positions. Participation of women in leadership and management positions would be more effective if the specific challenges are identified. This would assist in the development of strategies for improving effective participation of women in those sectors.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The specific questions asked in the research study were:

- To what extent were participants satisfied with their various roles as a manager at work, and as wife and mother at home?
- What challenges do the participants meet at work?
- What challenges do the participants meet at home?

The study employed a mixed methods approach to qualitative research. It was based on an in-depth case study of 8 participants. A questionnaire was also administered to 60 people using an interview guide addressing the same questions. Two focus discussion groups of 8 people in each group also gave their views to the same questions.

Using multiple sources of data was done to ensure validity of responses by cross referencing. The qualitative data was processed and analyzed using Nvivo and SPSS computer software programmes.

## **FINDINGS**

Findings from the study on challenges faced by the participants in the various roles, at work and at home are presented below.

### **Satisfaction with roles**

The following section presents findings on the level of satisfaction of the participants with the various roles of mother, wife and manager.

Using a 4 point rating scale described below, respondents rated their level of satisfaction with their roles as wife, mother and manager at work.

### **Rating Scale**

1 = Not at all satisfied; 2 = Not quite satisfied; 3 = somewhat satisfied; 4 = Very satisfied



### Satisfaction as a Wife

Table 1 below shows that only 19% of the respondents were very satisfied with their role and responsibility as a wife. Forty – two (42%) were somewhat satisfied, 11% were not quite satisfied and 4 % were not at all satisfied. Twenty-four (24%) did not indicate their level of satisfaction as a wife. Those who did not indicate their level of satisfaction as a wife were either widowed, not married or were separated from their spouses.

**Table 1: Satisfaction as a Wife**

Level of satisfaction as wife	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Very satisfied	11	19
Somewhat satisfied	24	42
Not quite satisfied	6	11
Not at all satisfied	2	4
No response	14	24
Total	57	100%

### Satisfaction as a manager

Table 2 below shows the level of satisfaction of the respondents as manager at work. It shows that 33 % were very satisfied with their role and responsibility as a manager at work. Fifty-four (54%) were somewhat satisfied, 9% were not quite satisfied and 2% were not at all satisfied. The other 2% did not respond to the question.

**Table 2 Satisfaction as a Manager**

Level of satisfaction as a manager	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Very satisfied	19	33%
Somewhat satisfied	31	54%
Not quite satisfied	5	9%
Not at all satisfied	1	2%
No response	1	2%
Total	57	100

### Satisfaction as a Mother

Table 3 shows that 26% of the respondents were satisfied with their role and responsibility as a mother. 40% were somewhat satisfied, 11% were not quite satisfied and 5% were not at all satisfied. The 18% who did not respond to the question did not indicate that they had children.



**Table 3 Satisfaction as a Mother**

Level of satisfaction as a mother	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Very satisfied	15	26%
Somewhat satisfied	23	40%
Not quite satisfied	6	11%
Not at all satisfied	3	5%
No response	10	18%
Total	57	100%

The findings on the extent to which participants were satisfied with their various roles as wife, mother and manager showed that only 33% were satisfied with their role as manager, only 26% were satisfied with their role as mother and only 19% were satisfied with their role as wife.

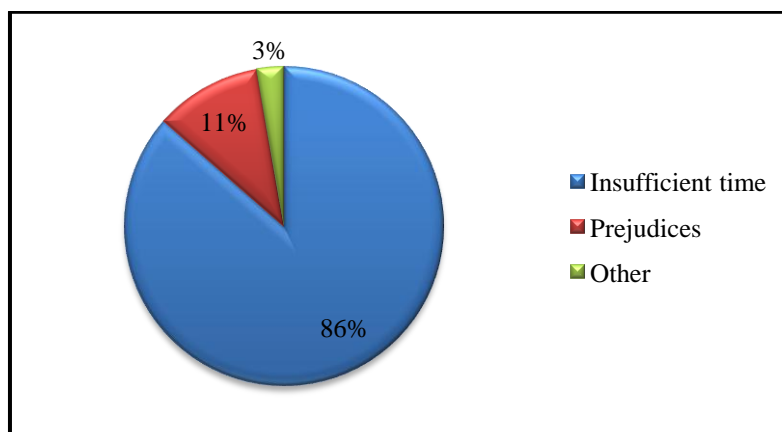
The study revealed a number of challenges that contributed to the low levels of satisfied with the various roles.

The low levels of satisfaction with the various roles emanate from the fact the participants find themselves in situations where there are many demands placed on them from the various role expectations as mother, wife and full time worker. Instead of just focusing on their career the woman manager's time is spread over many roles. There is time pressure and the result is that not enough time is spent with family. The participants indicated that they spent more time at work.

### **Challenges at home**

The pie chart in figure 1 is a graphic presentation of the challenges that women managers faced at home.

**Figure 1 Challenges at home**





The chart above shows that 85% of all the challenges that the respondents faced at home had to do with insufficient time and work life balance. The respondents expressed that in working hard, showing commitment to work and to be noticed the women had to put in a lot of extra time at work and thereby leaving very little time with family and husband. They found it difficult to balance work and family responsibilities. All respondents indicated that they spent less time with family and children than they would have liked. Insufficient time with family meant that they participated less in family functions such as ceremonies like funerals and weddings and school functions.

Eleven (11%) of the challenges that the respondents experienced at home had to do with gender expectations and prejudices. The gender role expectations for women as mother and wife means that women were expected to perform such responsibilities as preparing family meals, supervising homework and generally performing duties and responsibilities associated with home while the husband, as head of the family, was expected to spend more time outside the home earning a living.

One of the most commonly cited challenge facing women managers at home had to do with balancing work and family responsibilities. Gartzia (2012) established the same finding which concluded that motherhood impacted significantly on career opportunities for women. Motherhood implied a complex relationship between working hours breaks in careers and dependent children. The study concluded that the younger the age of children the greater the relative disadvantage in career progression. The research findings outlined in chapter 5 showed that 84% of the respondents were married and 86% of the respondents had children of school going age. This partly explained the challenge relating to insufficient time and difficulties in managing work life balances. In a study by CIMA Rapaciolli (2012) also noted the challenge associated with work life balance for women managers.

The challenges to do with gender role expectations included husbands feeling jealous and insecure with wives earning more than them and enjoying company benefits such as company vehicle and entertainment allowance. The husband felt insecure if they earned less than the wife and if he was to be seen being driven by his wife in her company car. It appears that this challenge has to be placed within the Zimbabwean cultural context as the student did not come across it in literature review.

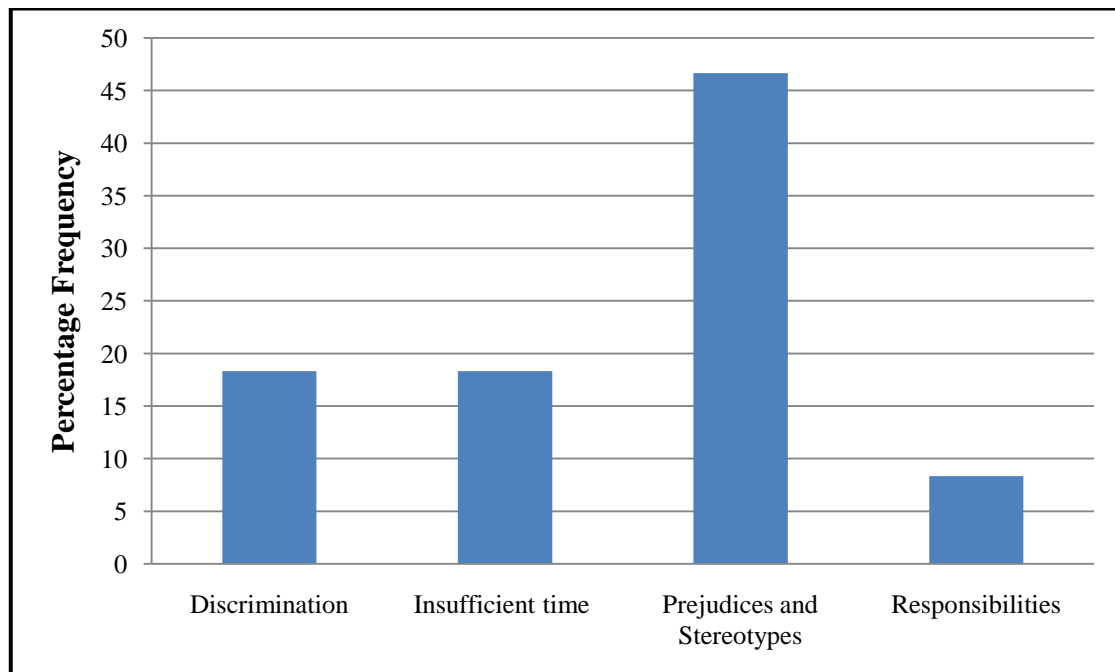


### Challenges at work

The challenges that participants experienced at work as women managers had to do with prejudices, stereotyping and discrimination and insufficient time. Figure 2 shows that about 46% of the challenges faced by women at work had to do with prejudices and stereotyping, followed by discrimination and insufficient time at 18%.

Challenges directly related to gender included prejudices, stereotyping and discrimination. The prejudices experienced especially in the hospitality sector were to do with the respondents being women and young. There was a perception among men in the hospitality sector that executives had to be male and older. Sometimes clients showed preference of wanting to be served by a male manager. When it came to shift work it was challenging for women to do the night shifts and the job required long hours of work and working during weekends.

**Figure 2 Challenges at work**



The findings also showed that it was challenging for women to deal with insubordinate male associates especially if the subordinates were older. Some respondents also indicated that they faced challenges in decision making especially in meetings when their opinions were taken in last with management showing preference for decisions coming from male colleagues. There was a feeling that some male colleagues felt threatened of being led by a woman. Respondents also expressed that in some cases they felt discriminated against by



other women managers not being supportive of each other and their preference to hiring men instead of women on the grounds that women go on maternity leave and that would affect the company.

## CONCLUSION

The study established the fact women were less represented at the top in their organizations is not peculiar to Zimbabwe. Women in management positions in the hospitality and financial services sectors in Zimbabwe faced a number of leadership and gender challenges that hindered them from breaking the “glass ceiling”. The challenges manifested themselves in the form of prejudices against female managers, with some organizations showing preference to hiring men over women in senior management positions and insubordination of male colleagues. The findings also show that the biggest challenge faced by women is that of work-life balance, emanating from pressure of time and the need to fulfill the multiple roles that a woman manager must fulfill as wife, mother and manager at work.

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